



My First Apocalypse



42 5 6

Chapter 1 by Deanna Balestra

Monday's were always hell, and this Monday was certainly no different.

Fifteen minutes into my shift and I had already spilled coffee on my shoes and smelled strongly of pancake syrup. But that wasn't the worst part. The worst part was the heat. Just barely spring and already sweltering in the diner. I brushed past a tired looking mom force feeding scrambled eggs to a screaming toddler and slammed my order pad down on the counter.

"Marty! Check the thermostat, I think it's broken again!" I knew Marty was probably hiding out in his office with his ear buds in, blissfully ignoring the fact that the rest of us were busting our butts as usual but that didn't stop me from bellowing towards the back office so everyone could hear. "Useless, completely useless," I muttered and picked up a plate of bacon and hotcakes.

I took a napkin out of my pocket and ran it across my wet forehead and turned to deliver my order. That's when a terrified looking man, mid 40's and a bit pudgy. came bursting through the front door. He was wild eyed and gasping for breath. "Don't go out there! Whatever you do, do not go out there!" Several people got up from their tables and walked towards him but he held out his hands to stop them.

"No! Don't come any closer! I'm not sure if it's contagious yet."

Chapter 2 by Windlion



The customers were starting to panic. That's bad news for tips.

I had to do something, quick. I stepped up to the fellow and spoke loudly and clearly to him to get everyone's attention — and he listened. Usually with their hands over their ears.

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"Sir, please. this is a family restaurant, and I won't have you disturbing our regular customers with scary talk like that. You need to settle down, right now. There's an open booth over in the corner. Please just go sit down and I'll bring you a cup of our famous coffee, guaranteed to cure whatever is troubling you."

He stared at me for a long minute, panting like a stray dog that had just escaped the catcher's net.

I looked him square in the eye with my "no nonsense allowed" glare.

He nodded and shuffled over to sit down, away from all my customers.

Who had better give me good tips.

Chapter 3 by Windlion



He was looking a little peaked.

"Okay, honey, let's see what we can do to make your day better. Coffee?"

He looked up and nodded, and the dark shadows in his eyes just pulled the mothering cord on me so strong, I nearly leaned over to give him a big hug.

"I'm not going to be able to pay," he said softly. "I'll be dead within an hour."

Oh, honey. "Well, life happens and then it don't. I've had more than one fellow skip paying for less good reason than being dead, and I don't hold it against them." Much. "Here's a menu, honey, you look for what pleases you and I'll get your coffee. It'll cure whatever ails you, guaranteed."

Sure hope so, anyhow.

Chapter 4 by Windlion



Sure enough. Diner coffee, good for what ails you. Mister Doom perked right up, ordered the special and a side of pie,

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By the time I got down, there was a line of desperate looking folk at the door. They were being queued up by my regular customers, God bless them, and a couple more came over to ask me if they could handle passing out coffee, washing cups, whatever needed doing.

"Girls, you are my angels," I choked, fighting back tears. "I'm going to run back in the storeroom and get some more coffee cans —" at which point one of the old fellows stepped up and said he'd carry them up for me, just point the way, and I did start tearing up a little, God bless them all, even if that one is a cheapskate tipper.

I'm forgetting something important. Right.

"Wait, but first, Mister Anderson? Could you get the word to the police officers somehow so we can get their orders? It's on the house, I'm thinking they must be having a rough shift today." He nodded.

God bless 'em all, except Marty. He hasn't stirred from his office. I should dump a pot of coffee on his head, just to make sure he doesn't get sick.

Write a draft for chapter 5 of 8

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